

REASONS

Against the BILL now Depending in

PARLIAMENT,

For Restraining the USE of

GOLD and SILVER-LACE,

EMBROIDERY, &c.

In a LETTER from a CITIZEN to a
MEMBER of PARLIAMENT.

Interdum Vulgus rectum videt. H o r.



L O N D O N:

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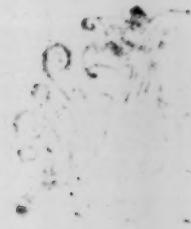
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REASONS

AGAINST THE

BILL for Restraining the
Use of GOLD and SILVER LACE,
EMBROIDERY, &c.

SIR,

THE Publick have seen, with great Concern, that a Bill is brought into your House, for limiting the Privilege of wearing Gold and Silver Lace, Embroidery, and all Sorts of our Manufactures that are interwoven or mixed with Gold and Silver. And some

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have reported that you came into
the Motion.

I am satisfied, Sir, that a Gentleman of your Good-Sense and Humanity would not have engaged in this Bill, if you saw it in the light it appears to me in : For to contrive the inevitable Ruin of many Thousand Families, which are now concerned in this Manufacture, without any *apparent* Use to the *Publick*, is not at all agreeable to your **Character**.

How far the Limitation may extend, we cannot yet say ; but we are told that the Intention of those who moved it, is to suppress the Manufacture. Some are of opinion that the Bill cannot pass in this shape, because the Government is concerned in

in the Revenue which arises from it : But they think it will be turned into a Money-Bill, and that the Ministry will accordingly lay a high Duty upon it ; which, they say, will both suppress Luxury and increase the Revenue too.

THIS Limitation of the Privilege of wearing these Sort of Manufactures, is a Hint borrowed, I suppose, from the *Czarina's* late Edict. And it may found well enough out of the Mouth of an arbitrary Princess ; “ I will “ be distinguished from my Sub-“ jects, though Fifty Thousand of “ them are undone by it.” But how agreeable that is to a great Trading Nation, and a Free People, as we are, I leave you to reconcile to your Principles of Patriotism. But in fact, Sir, the Case of the

Czarina's Subjects and Us, is widely different ; and what was great Wisdom in Her, would be the highest Folly in our Government : as shall be taken notice of by and by. For which reason, the Bill cannot pass in that Degree. But they say, you have enlarged your Scheme of Exceptions. Let the Restriction be what it will, Sir, it will be a very pernicious thing : And whilst your Hand was in, I wonder you did not add a Clause of Privilege for selling it, and get Letters Patent for only such and such Persons to have that Liberty, under the Penalty of, &c. But indeed your Limitation would have the same Effect without the Penalty ; for very few Persons could be concerned in it : And then you must pay what Price they pleased for it.

THE advanced Duty is what we dread most; because the Restriction Bill is, by what we hear, contrary to the Sentiments of nine Parts in ten of our worthy Representatives. They talk of a Shilling *per* Ounce; but we confide in the Wisdom and Publick-spiritedness of our Ministers, and hope, upon duly weighing the Matter, they will sooner take off the Duty now upon it. They cannot expect to increase the Revenue, which arises from a flourishing Manufacture, by *ruining* it: And if we suppose this would only reduce it so low, that the eighteen Pence *per* Ounce upon the Quantity which would then be used, were an Equivalent to six Pence *per* Ounce upon the present Consumption, they would then have gained nothing

thing to the Revenue, and done a great Injury to many Thousands of the Subjects.

BUT what are the Arguments for the Bill ? Some say, it is a Loss to the Nation to have such a Waste of Bullion, and such a Quantity of Silver useless. But these Persons understand very little of Trade : For what is the Silver but a Merchandise, an Article of Commerce, as well as the Silk it is spun upon ? And it hath an Advantage in this shape, that it is not lock'd up for many Years together, nor does it perish like the Silk ; but is worked up over and over again, and pays many times the six Pence *per Ounce* arising to the Government from this Manufacture. This, if duly considered, will abundantly answer all

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Arguments from the supposed Waste or Uselessness of the Silver. The very Waste of the Silk too, which in that respect is but like other Manufactures that are worn out, hath this to be said for it, that it affords Bread to great numbers of industrious People, to prepare again what is fit for this Manufacture, and makes a considerable Addition to the Customs.

AND pray, Sir, give me leave to ask you what is to become of our foreign Trade in this Article? You will answer perhaps, that a Draw-back is to be allowed: But this will by no means do, Sir; for if you put any Restrictions, or any additional Impost upon this Manufacture, so as to discourage the Use of it, (which is what you would have done) you will thereby so enhance the Value,

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that we cannot send it to a foreign Market. It is not taking off the eighteen Pence *per Ounce* that will reduce it to the present Price. Every Merchant can tell you, that the greater the Consumption is of any Manufacture, the cheaper it is. I'll give you the Reason: Suppose a Person returns Ten Thousand Pounds a Year in his Business, he can sell for 7 or 8 *per Cent.* Profit, and he gets 7 or 800*l.* a Year by it. But if he returns but One Thousand Pounds, he cannot maintain his Family by so small a Gain. The Manufacturer who works three Days, and stands still one, because there is no greater Demand upon him, cannot do his Work so cheap as if he had constant Employment. This is one Reason, amongst others, why the *French* undersell us in this Article;

cle; because they having no Duty upon it, make greater Quantities, and have constant Employment for the Hands concerned in it. Therefore, Sir, you must encourage it at home, and we will rival our Enemies abroad.

BUT what is still worse, Sir ; if you lay an additional Duty upon this Commodity, we shall have such Quantities of *French* Goods run in upon us, in spite of all our Cruizers and Custom-house Officers, that we shall have hardly any Manufacture of this sort left ; for the great Gain will tempt Men to run the risk. It is too notorious in other Instances, where high Duties are laid upon foreign Commodities. And though you perhaps would not buy any thing of this sort, yet numbers

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would, notwithstanding the Prohibition; and even have the *Effrontery* to appear before their Sovereign dress'd up in this *forbidden Fabrick of France*. Though no good Reason can be given why the Person, who does wear such a Manufacture, is not guilty of Felony against his Country; and why he ought not to be dealt with by Law in the same manner as an Offender is who buys stolen Goods, knowing them to be such. But to our present Purpose.

I imagine, Sir, it will be allow'd that those Manufactures are the use-fullest in every Country, which are intirely work'd up at home, and which employ the greatest number of Hands to perfect them. This, Sir, is one of the most considerable
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we have in *England* upon both these Accounts, and therefore worthy the Care of the Legislature to preserve.

BUT this is Luxury : an useless Part of Dress. So is Velvet, and so is Silk Apparel, with many other things in use amongst us ; that is, Sir, if you deem every thing such, that is not *necessary* for the Purposes of human Life. And if you go on to attack our Manufactures one after another, the Ruin of *your Country*, (for we can no longer call it *ours*, *nos Patriam fugimus*) will soon be compleated.

You are very careful, Sir, of a few extravagant Persons ; but surely you will be tender of sacrificing the Welfare of such numbers of indu-

strious People for their sakes. Neither, I dare say, do you, nor does any thinking Man believe that this Bill will prevent the spending of that Money, which a Man of no Oeconomy is willing to dispose of. I need not enumerate the many ways and means of effecting this, more pernicious, and more costly, because more constant, than this of Apparel.

If the noble Lord who moved for this Bill had fix'd it upon any Manufacture which is imported from abroad, and which employs the Poor of another Country, it would have been a worthy Design.

I think, Sir, it is the Opinion of all Men of Sense, that the Revocation of the Edict of *Nantz* was a great

great Acquisition to us, and a great Loss to *France*; by the Addition of People to this Nation, and the transplanting of their Manufactures to us; which not only supported them, but found Employment for many of our own Subjects, by striking out new Branches of Business; and thereby considerably increased the Revenue of the Crown and the Wealth of the Publick in general. But we must now return our good Friends the Favour of sending back great Numbers of this useful Part of the Commonwealth. Nothing but the weighty Concern of Religious Power could have induced the *French* Ministry, at that time, to take such a Step: But we, though we are not cunning enough to ward off the Evils they would fasten upon us, are yet so ingenious, it seems, as to

to counterwork any Advantages that might be made of their ill Policy.

WE had our Sumptuary Laws in former Times, before we were so great a Trading People as we now are, in the Reigns of *Henry IV.* and *Edward IV.* which affected some inconsiderable Particulars. The *Romans*, we know, restrained the Use of some of these Manufactures, amongst other things. And we have heard lately that the *Czarina* has forbid the wearing of them, except to her own Family. And not without Reason, as they were supplied with all that they consumed, by the Subjects of other Countries; the former out of the Looms of *Perſia*, and the latter from those of *France* and *Germany*. But if the States of *Brabant* were to issue out

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an Edict, discouraging the Use of Brussels Lace ; because too great Sums of Money passed from one to another, by reason of this Manufacture : I believe all the World would be astonished at their Policy.

I am told, Sir, you affect the Name of a Roman : But your Country would be obliged to you, if you *acted the Part of a Briton*. The Romans, you know, were not a People that subsisted by Trade, as we do, but by the Plunder of Conquered Provinces ; and, in the Time of their Heroism, were the Destroyers of Arts and Industry. We are no Conquerors, nor is it our Interest to aim at being so, but to encourage our People in their Industry, and keep up our Manufactures as well as we can. Our aspiring Neighbours

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may in time effect what you propose : But let us not pull the Mischief upon our own Heads.

To make the Busines a little clearer to you ; We will suppose, for Argument's sake, that another Persecution were to arise in *France* or in *Flanders*, amongst the Manufacturers of Cambrick or *Brussels* Lace, and Thirty or Forty Thousand of them desired to settle amongst us, and transplant their Manufactures hither. I believe, Sir, it would be the Wisdom of our Legislature to receive them with the Privileges of *Englishmen*. Because it is an acknowledged Maxim, that the Strength of a Nation consists in the Number of its Inhabitants ; and its Treasure is, to have as few Wants

as

as possible to be supplied from abroad.

THEY might inhabit the vast Number of empty Houses that are about this City, which would ease us in the Land-Tax : They would eat our Bread, and be cloathed with our Wool, which would benefit the Landed Interest : They would take off Part of our Manufactures of all Sorts, which lie upon our Hands, and keep our Workmen idle for Want of a free Trade abroad ; with many other Advantages, which I need not mention here. But for these Considerations, I believe our Legislature would be willing to receive them.

WE, Sir, are your Countrymen and Fellow-Citizens : And do we

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therefore deserve worse at your Hands than Strangers would ? Must we be denied the Countenance and Protection, which no doubt would be granted to them ? Is this a *Roman* Part ? No, Sir ; that wise People were tender of their Citizens, perhaps partial to them ; but never surely denied them Privileges, which other Nations had an equitable Claim to. Consider besides, Sir, that very large Properties are *now* concerned ; and, if this Bill passes, as you will in a great measure destroy several Branches of our Manufacture, so many Thousands of our People would be turned out of a Livelihood *already* established.

AND now, Sir, I will answer, in a few Words, your great Cry against this Piece of Luxury. What you say

say of it, amounts to no more than this, *That too great Sums of Money pass from one to another by reason of this Manufacture.* And one may presume to assert, that Money circulating in a Country, does not, by only changing Hands, impoverish it. For without such a Circulation, the Body Politick is like the Natural Body, which cannot be in Health, unless the Vital Spirits are conveyed to every Member of it.

I'M sensible, this Argument has been used against those who exclaimed at the great Taxes we have laboured under, and the vast Expence of Government, as thinking it a sufficient Answer, *that the Money was still spent amongst ourselves.* But the Case is not parallel. I will not, however, trouble you much

with enlarging upon this ; only give me leave to say a little more upon the Injury you would do yourselves, by oppressing your poor Manufacturers.

HERE are no *Pensioners*, Sir, no *Drones*, no *unnecessary Men* ; but Three or Four Hundred of them live by the Sweat of their Brows upon what is annually allowed to several single Persons about a Court. This may be just ; I will not dispute it : We ought to support the Dignity of the State. But why, Sir, would you endeavour to put it out of the power of these Manufacturers to fulfil their Task ? Can they make Bricks without Straw ? Does not the Reward of their Labours enable them to pay their Rent to the Landlord, their Taxes to maintain the Government, and to the Support of the Poor of

their respective Parishes ; besides the Assistance they give to every Branch of Business whatever ? How will the Case be altered, when many Thousands of these People shall become the Objects of that Charity they used to bestow ! And whenever you pass this Bill, you pass that Sentence upon them. Our Manufactures of all Sorts are already over-stocked with Hands, and many are starving for Want of Employment. Our Poor are numerous enough, and more than we can well support. Our Streets and Highways are infested with Robbers ; and our Prisons too full to receive these new Inhabitants.

To admit, Sir, of the Importation of foreign Manufactures, and to destroy so extensive a Branch of
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our own, is strange indeed ; it is such a singular Piece of Policy, that of all the wonderful Things we have seen in our Days, nothing has equal'd this : Even those who thought they should wonder no more at any thing, do now wonder again.

AND here, Sir, I cannot but observe what an extraordinary Reason is given for bringing in this Bill, besides what is already answered. Because, they say, great Quantities of Materials for making Gold and Silver Lace, &c. are imported from foreign Parts, contrary to the Laws of the Land. I suppose, Sir, we have the Liberty of making what Remarks we please upon any Bill, or any Reasons for a Bill, which has not received the Sanction of Parliament :

ment: And therefore I will say, that this is either an egregious Mistake, or it is so archly express'd, that it would puzzle a Conjurer to find out the Meaning of it. But I suppose it will be explained in a proper Place.

THE last thing I shall take notice of, is, the Persons to be excepted: For these, they tell us, a Blank is left. But we suppose, by what we hear is set forth in the Preamble to the Bill, of Persons not being able to afford the Expence of these sort of Manufactures, that this is done in kindness to the Dealers in them, that they may not trust Persons who never intend to pay. It is seriously said, Sir, by some of these Gentlemen, that the Qualification ought to be the same as it is for a Seat in
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the House of Commons. The Worth of a Justice of Peace is not sufficient to intitle him to this Privilege. We are greatly obliged to the Projectors of this well-fancied Bill. Who they are that ought to be excepted, we could very easily tell them. Not a great number perhaps of those whom they would except. For let a Person's Income be what it will, if he has so many Outlets of Expences that he cannot *pay* for the Lace he wears, he cannot *afford to buy it.*

AND here, Sir, I could enter into a Detail of many further Evils that would arise from your lopping off this piece of Ornament, or Luxury, as you call it, from *particular Persons*; which would shew you that it would only be like the old Story of cutting

cutting off the Head of *Hydra*, in the room of which many and more terrible ones sprouted out. But I hope I have said enough already to convince you, and all the Gentlemen of your Party, that you are engaged in a very bad Scheme. All that I shall add upon this Head, is, that we humbly intreat this Blank of Exceptions may be fill'd up in a general Phrase, that none shall be allowed to wear these Manufactures but those that, according to the Tenour of the Bill, *can afford to pay for them*; that is, do actually pay for them within six Months after the Delivery of the Goods; in Failure whereof, they shall be carried before one or more of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, and their Goods and Chattels shall be distrained for the Payment thereof, as they say is set forth

forth in the Bill upon another Account.

WHAT I have here offer'd to you, Sir, I hope you will not take amiss. I have known your Character to be that of a Gentleman of great Honour and great Humanity, and I hope your Heart is not so soon petrified by your exalted Station, but that you will feel a little the Distress this Act would occasion.

I will now spare you any further Trouble, as I suppose your House will soon be waited on by the several Companies concerned in these Manufactures, with more Particulars than I have mentioned; not as sturdy Beggars, but with that Submission and Respect which ought always to be paid to your august Assembly.

fsembly. For you are our Guardians and our Lawgivers too. And as we very well know that you yourself, notwithstanding the present Mistake, and a great Majority of your House are the Friends of Liberty, we presume to say that we should do you an Injustice to *imagine* that you will not favour us in so just a Cause. For to *suspect* those of ill Designs, who intend nothing but our Welfare and Happiness, is, in some measure, not to *deserve* their Protection.

I am, S I R,

Your most Obedient,

Humble Servant,

A MANUFACTURER.



